# Waveney MP demands government clarity on regulating megafarms amid environmental backlash



A Waveney MP has issued a stark appeal to the Government, urging it to articulate a clear strategy to combat the proliferation of so-called 'Mega Farms', industrial-scale agricultural operations that have sparked considerable local and environmental concerns. Adrian Ramsay has secured a Westminster Hall debate to discuss the matter, which will convene at 2.30pm tomorrow. The call comes in the wake of significant public opposition and recent planning decisions, notably the rejection of a large-scale farming proposal by food production giant Cranswick in Methwold, Norfolk.

The plans for the megafarm, which aimed to house approximately 714,000 chickens and 14,000 pigs, were met with unanimous disapproval by King’s Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council. Planners highlighted the project's significant environmental impacts, particularly those related to greenhouse gas emissions from livestock waste. They referenced the 'Finch' Supreme Court ruling, asserting that downstream emissions must be considered in planning decisions—an approach that environmentalists believe could set a critical precedent for regulating industrial farming practices across the UK.

Ramsay has articulated the pervasive anxiety within local communities regarding the potential implications of such industrial farms. He stated, “There are huge concerns about pollution impacts, traffic movements that come with it and how animal waste could worsen the ongoing sewage crisis.” He urged the Government to clarify its stance, emphasising the need to move away from practices that appear to conflict with the nation’s agricultural identity and standards, saying, “This is not who we are as a country.”

The resonance of Ramsay's words reflects a broader discontent. Campaigners and local residents have rallied against large-scale farming operations, expressing fears over environmental degradation, animal welfare, and public health. This local resistance is echoed by prominent environmental groups such as Sustain and Feedback Global, which have raised alarms over potential emissions that could increase county-wide pollution levels by 6%. Critics argue these megafarms threaten local biodiversity, road safety, and community health, exacerbating existing issues such as odour and air quality as evidenced by ongoing complaints from neighbouring communities.

In its defence, Cranswick claims that its proposal would promote British meat self-sufficiency and adhere to world-class animal welfare standards. The company points out that intensive farming models are essential for meeting the increasing demand for poultry in the UK, which accounts for 82% of poultry consumption in 2023. However, this assertion has drawn scepticism, particularly following an undercover investigation that uncovered animal cruelty at a Cranswick facility, temporarily affecting the company’s stock value.

With planning authorities now increasingly scrutinising environmental impacts, the rejection of Cranswick's proposal marks a key case in the ongoing debate over the moral and practical dimensions of intensive agriculture. Local MP Terry Jermy has also voiced his concerns, supporting calls for a comprehensive review of environmental regulations, particularly given that industrial-scale farms in East Anglia have reportedly breached environmental standards over 700 times in the past seven years. Jermy noted that many in the farming community feel that what is presented as agricultural practice is, in fact, a form of industrialisation.

As the Government prepares for the upcoming debate, the stakes surrounding industrial farming practices continue to rise. The clash between agricultural development and environmental stewardship signals an urgent need for a more sustainable and humane approach to farming in the UK, one that balances economic demands with ecological responsibility. The forthcoming discussions in Parliament will likely serve as a bellwether for future agricultural policy and its intersection with community wellbeing and environmental ethics.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://hellorayo.co.uk/greatest-hits/norfolk/news/govt-clear-plans-mega-farms-waveney-mp), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/9c2fbe82-709b-4d0b-b459-b6b22a112983)
* Paragraph 2 – [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/apr/03/plan-for-norfolk-megafarm-rejected-by-councillors-over-environmental-concerns), [[6]](https://terryjermy.com/news/mp-calls-for-full-reviewafter-700-environmental-regulations-broken-because-of-factory-farming/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/3a1a6fc5-f887-4120-a613-f8f92d7366af), [[4]](https://www.worldanimalprotection.org.uk/latest/news/cranswick-megafarm-planning-rejected/), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/apr/03/plan-for-norfolk-megafarm-rejected-by-councillors-over-environmental-concerns)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/9c2fbe82-709b-4d0b-b459-b6b22a112983), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/apr/03/plan-for-norfolk-megafarm-rejected-by-councillors-over-environmental-concerns)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/3a1a6fc5-f887-4120-a613-f8f92d7366af), [[6]](https://terryjermy.com/news/mp-calls-for-full-reviewafter-700-environmental-regulations-broken-because-of-factory-farming/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[6]](https://terryjermy.com/news/mp-calls-for-full-reviewafter-700-environmental-regulations-broken-because-of-factory-farming/), [[7]](https://feedbackglobal.org/press-release-council-must-reject-megafarm-on-climate-grounds-say-campaigners-on-final-day-of-public-consultation-generating-thousands-of-objections/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://hellorayo.co.uk/greatest-hits/norfolk/news/govt-clear-plans-mega-farms-waveney-mp> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/9c2fbe82-709b-4d0b-b459-b6b22a112983> - Plans by Cranswick, a FTSE 250 company, to construct a large livestock facility in Norfolk were unanimously rejected by King’s Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council due to environmental concerns. The proposed 'megafarm' would have included 14 barns for 14,000 pigs and 20 sheds housing 714,000 chickens. Citing the 'Finch' Supreme Court ruling, which mandates consideration of downstream emissions in planning decisions, the council's officers argued that the environmental impact of the development, including greenhouse gas emissions from pig manure and proximity to protected areas, outweighed any public benefit. This marks the first significant application of the Finch ruling outside the oil and gas sector, with environmentalists viewing the decision as a potential precedent for industrial farming cases. Campaign groups Feedback Global and Sustain estimated the farm could raise local emissions by 6% and labeled the case a test for broader climate accountability in agriculture. While Cranswick expressed disappointment, citing the project’s role in supporting UK meat self-sufficiency and improved animal welfare, critics like MP Terry Jermy and Sustain’s Lily O'Mara highlighted its contribution to the climate crisis.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/3a1a6fc5-f887-4120-a613-f8f92d7366af> - Cherry Tree Farm in Norfolk, part of Cranswick's network of intensive pig and chicken farms, exemplifies the UK’s evolving agricultural landscape. While the farm has operated since the 1960s, its expansion into large-scale operations has sparked local and activist opposition. Cranswick, a FTSE 250 food producer, plans to build a 'megafarm' housing 14,000 pigs and 714,000 chickens near two Norfolk villages, but the proposal was rejected due to environmental and welfare concerns. Public criticism escalated after an undercover report revealed animal cruelty at a Cranswick farm, causing a temporary drop in its stock value despite the company’s overall strong financial performance. Cranswick claims to meet supermarket-imposed welfare standards, including increasing space for chickens and installing emission-reducing air scrubbers. Critics argue such megafarms are unsustainable, but proponents highlight the UK's reliance on intensive farming to meet 82% of its 2023 poultry demand. As the debate over ethical and practical farming continues, Cranswick may appeal the council’s decision, spotlighting broader tensions about food production, local impact, and environmental responsibility.
4. <https://www.worldanimalprotection.org.uk/latest/news/cranswick-megafarm-planning-rejected/> - Plans to build one of Europe’s largest factory farms in Norfolk have been rejected by West Norfolk Council, following widespread opposition from local residents, campaigners and environmental groups. The proposals, submitted by meat giant Cranswick, sought to construct a vast industrial farming complex in the villages of Methwold and Feltwell. If approved, the site would have included 20 poultry sheds to house 870,000 chickens and 14 pig buildings for 14,000 pigs, all on a disused RAF base. But after receiving thousands of objections and strong criticism from multiple stakeholders, the council has now formally rejected the application. The rejection is positive news for animals, people and the planet. The proposals had sparked alarm over the environmental, ethical and public health risks of intensive farming systems. Concerns raised included: Air and water pollution from ammonia and waste runoff; Loss of biodiversity and harm to nearby wildlife; Road safety and increased HGV traffic; Biosecurity threats to neighbouring farms; The immense suffering of animals kept in crowded, unnatural conditions. Residents near another Cranswick-operated site in Stow Bedon had already reported ongoing issues with odour and health, fuelling further resistance to the Methwold and Feltwell proposals.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/apr/03/plan-for-norfolk-megafarm-rejected-by-councillors-over-environmental-concerns> - Objections came from a local campaign group, NGOs including WWF, Sustain, FeedBack, and the RSPB, as well as the new Labour MP for South West Norfolk, Terry Jermy, and five parish councils. Jermy told the planning meeting on Thursday the intensive farm would threaten local jobs at established farms and businesses, including the vegetarian food giant Quorn, which has a manufacturing site in Methwold. Jake White, head of legal advocacy at WWF UK, told councillors the NGO estimated that the factory farm’s two sites would produce almost 50,000 tonnes of CO₂ a year. Over a 20-year lifespan the greenhouse gas emissions from the industrial-style farms would be more than 1m tonnes, he said. Cranswick plc, which provides chicken and poultry to leading British supermarkets, wants to build one of the UK’s largest industrial farms by expanding an existing site to rear 870,000 chickens and 14,000 pigs at any one time. In a briefing document submitted in the days before the planning meeting, the company said it wanted to modernise for a growing market, creating more British food to higher welfare standards through the redevelopment of existing farms. King’s Lynn and West Norfolk borough council was recommended to reject the application on ecology and climate change grounds by its officers. In a 200-page report, planning officers said the applicant “fails to demonstrate that the development would not result in significant adverse effects on [environmentally] protected sites”. There was also “insufficient environmental information to enable the council to reach a view” on its impact on the environment and climate change, the report added. A council lawyer said the company had not provided information on all the likely carbon emissions from the industrial farm and it would be unlawful for councillors to approve the application. There are also concerns about air pollution and the impact on a water-depleted area. The Environmental Law Foundation said the farm would need more water than its abstraction licence allowed. Cranswick said the new site was needed to keep up with demand from supermarkets. Barry Lock, managing director for Cranswick in East Anglia, denied claims that the company had plans to export poultry and pork. He said 96% of the food they produced was for British customers. Lock cited food security and increased jobs. He said approving the megafarm would reduce carbon emissions because it would reduce the need for imports of meat from abroad.
6. <https://terryjermy.com/news/mp-calls-for-full-reviewafter-700-environmental-regulations-broken-because-of-factory-farming/> - Industrial-scale farms in East Anglia have violated environmental standards more than 700 times in the last seven years, according to Freedom of Information (FOI) data. NGOs Sustain and Feedback Global revealed that intensive poultry and pig farms have broken environmental standards at least 776 times. Between 2017 and 2024, there were at least two breaches per week, or approximately ten per month. Terry Jermy MP, Member of Parliament for South West Norfolk, said he was “appalled and shocked” and called for a “full review” to ensure that environmental protections are in place and be adhered, protecting the land and waterways in surrounding areas. Jermy stated, “This is now the time to have a real conversation about intensive factory farming. To many farmers I speak to they have said to me ‘this isn’t farming, its industrialisation’.” Only last week was the deadline for submission to Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council for the proposed “mega-farm” at Methwold, which if approved, would become the largest in the UK.
7. <https://feedbackglobal.org/press-release-council-must-reject-megafarm-on-climate-grounds-say-campaigners-on-final-day-of-public-consultation-generating-thousands-of-objections/> - Environmental campaigners are urging King’s Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council to reject controversial plans for a US-style ‘megafarm,' saying a lack of greenhouse gas emissions information in the application is not legally compliant. The proposed development – which would produce over six million chickens and 56,000 pigs a year – could increase borough-wide emissions by a huge 6%. This would jeopardise both local and national climate targets. In a joint submission to the planning application made today (24 January, 2025), environmental campaign group Feedback Global and Sustain, the alliance for better food and farming, detail serious flaws in the application. This comes on the final day of the consultation, which has generated thousands of objections on a range of grounds including waste, odour, traffic, water and air quality, and climate harm.